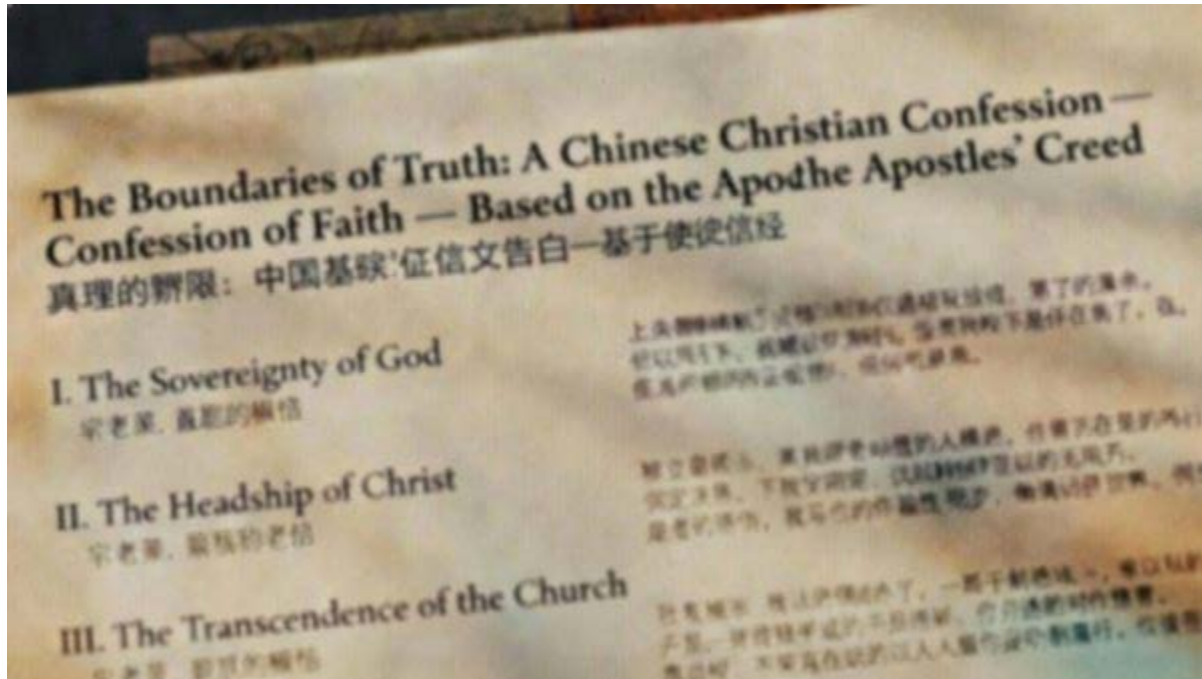


# The Boundaries of Truth: A Chinese Christian Confession of Faith — Based on the Apostles' Creed

January 27, 2026, written by the Lord's servant Sheng En in Toronto



## I. I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth Theological Analysis: Supreme Sovereignty and Created Order

- **Absolute Sovereignty:** God's "almighty" nature refers not merely to the magnitude of His power, but to the scope of His sovereignty. If God is the Creator of heaven and earth, then no corner of the universe lies outside His jurisdiction.
- **Derivative Nature of Power:** Theology must distinguish between "ultimate power" and "derivative power." Earthly authorities (Romans 13:1) are temporarily delegated by God to maintain order in the created realm; their legitimacy is limited by God's moral law. When derivative power claims to be ultimate and demands absolute obedience, it falls into the sin of usurpation.
- **Order of Creation:** The church exists based on God's creation and election, not on human social contracts. Therefore, the essential nature of the church is defined by God and cannot be reshaped by any administrative regulations.

## Scriptural Support and Interpretation

- Genesis 1:1: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” Interpretation: This establishes the “property rights” of the universe. Since ownership of heaven and earth belongs to God, any regime’s claims over church resources, land, or teaching authority are, theologically speaking, secondary and subject to judgment.
- Acts 5:29: “We must obey God rather than men.” Interpretation: This draws the boundary of obedience. Believers’ obedience to earthly authorities is relative and conditional, while obedience to God is absolute and unconditional.

### Historical Examples and Contemporary Relevance

- Historical Example: The early church refused to bow to images of Roman emperors, as this crossed the boundary of “God alone is the Creator.”
- Contemporary Relevance: Reject any teaching that elevates the state, nation, or leader’s will to “supreme” status. The church’s administration should reflect God’s sovereignty, not merely function as a branch of social management.

## II. I believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord Theological Analysis: The Headship of Christ (Christocracy)

- **Exclusivity of Headship:** Christ is not only the personal Savior of believers but also the sole Head of the church. This means the church is not a “civil organization” but the “kingdom of Christ.”
- **Spiritual Jurisdiction:** The church’s doctrine, sacraments, and discipline fall under Christ’s spiritual jurisdiction. Any external power attempting to interfere in the appointment of pastors, interpretation of doctrine, or administration of sacraments challenges Christ’s kingship.
- **Political Implications of the Incarnation:** Jesus is “Lord” (Kyrios), a term that directly challenged the political myth of “Caesar is Lord” in that era. By confessing Christ as Lord, Christians declare that their souls and faith life are not under absolute control by any secular sovereignty.

### Scriptural Support and Interpretation

- Ephesians 1:22: “He put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church.” Interpretation: Christ’s leadership over the church is direct and non-delegated. No committee or administrative body can claim to be Christ’s proxy in ruling the church on earth.
- 1 Corinthians 3:11: “For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” Interpretation: The church’s identity is not

defined by cultural context or political affiliation, but by Christ as its foundation.

#### Historical Examples and Contemporary Relevance

- **Historical Example:** The 1934 Barmen Declaration affirmed: Jesus Christ is the one Word we must obey in life and in death, rejecting the church's subordination to "Nazi Germany."
- **Contemporary Relevance:** Independence of the pulpit. Preaching must remain faithful to Scripture and cannot incorporate external propaganda or ideologies that contradict Christ's redemptive gospel.

### **III. Conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary** Theological Analysis: The Transcendence and Inviolability of Revelation

- **Supernatural Origin:** Christ's origin is not a logical evolution of human history but God's direct intervention (conception by the Holy Spirit). This establishes the "revealed" character of Christian faith.
- **Objectivity of the Gospel:** Since the gospel is not a human invention, no one has the right to alter it. The boundary of truth lies here: it cannot undergo "substantial reconstruction" due to changes in social systems or pressures from cultural preferences.
- **Authority of Scripture:** The Holy Spirit not only conceived Christ but also inspired Scripture. As God's Word, Scripture holds the highest and final authority in the church's life.

#### Scriptural Support and Interpretation

- Galatians 1:11-12: "The gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel... but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ." Interpretation: This warns the church against sacrificing the original core of the gospel for the sake of "contextualization." Any attempt to change the essence of the gospel amounts to apostasy.
- 2 Timothy 3:16: "All Scripture is breathed out by God." Interpretation: This establishes the church's highest "legal basis." The ultimate binding authority on believers' consciences is Scripture, not secular ideological guidelines.

#### Historical Examples and Contemporary Relevance

- Historical Example: The Council of Nicaea opposed Arianism and guarded Christ's divinity. Without this boundary, Christianity would devolve into an ethical philosophy that drifts with changes in political regimes.
- Contemporary Relevance: Oppose, under the pretext of "adapting to the times," any tampering with or evasion of biblical teachings on sin, final judgment, and exclusive salvation.

#### **IV. Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified** Theological Analysis: Theology of the Cross and Critique of Power

- **Limitations and Blindness of Earthly Power:** Christ's suffering under Pilate and the religious council reveals that created powers, when not subject to God, inevitably persecute truth.
- **Necessity of Suffering:** The trajectory of a Christian life is "suffering first, then glory." Thus, when the church prioritizes "present peace" or "reconciliation with power" as its highest goal, it often loses the witness of the cross.
- **Non-violent Witness:** Christ's obedience on the cross shows that the church's strength lies not in competing for secular influence with power, but in the spiritual vitality displayed through persevering in truth.

#### Scriptural Support and Interpretation

- John 19:11: "You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above." Interpretation: Christ's calm in the face of unjust trial stems from recognition of God's higher judgment. This teaches believers to fix their eyes on God's righteousness even amid secular injustice.
- 1 Peter 2:21: "For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps." Interpretation: Suffering is not failure but the mark of following Christ.

#### Historical Examples and Contemporary Relevance

- Historical Example: Dietrich Bonhoeffer spoke of "costly grace," noting that if faith does not demand we bear the cross, it is merely cheap religious comfort.
- Contemporary Relevance: Teach believers to prepare for the cost of being "marginalized" in workplaces, schools, and society due to refusing to conform or upholding faith principles.

#### **V. On the third day he rose again from the dead** Theological Analysis: Ultimate Hope and the Dissolution of Fear

- **Resurrection as Judgment on History:** The resurrection declares Christ's victory over the ultimate threat on earth—death. This dismantles the ability of powers to control consciences through intimidation.
- **Eschatological Freedom:** The resurrection enables believers to live in the “already but not yet” hope, producing “spiritual freedom” — no longer fully enslaved by gains and losses in this world.
- **The Final Meaning of History:** The resurrection proves that history's ultimate interpreter is Christ, not any ideology or historical law.

### Scriptural Support and Interpretation

- 1 Corinthians 15:55: “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” Interpretation: The resurrection demolishes the world's most severe coercive force — fear of death.
- Revelation 1:18: “I have the keys of Death and Hades.” Interpretation: This declares Christ as the true Lord of history; believers' sense of security is grounded here.

### Historical Examples and Contemporary Relevance

- **Historical Example:** Believers in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe persisted in celebrating Easter under harsh conditions, declaring God's eternal sovereignty and the eventual passing of oppressive regimes.
- **Contemporary Relevance:** The truth of the resurrection enables the church to maintain transcendent peace amid temporary setbacks (e.g., sealed meeting places or obstructed ministries), confident that God's kingdom will continually expand.

## **VI. I believe in the holy catholic church** Theological Analysis: The Holiness and Catholicity of the Church

- **Attributes:** The church is “holy,” meaning it must be set apart from secular discourse systems; it is “catholic,” meaning it belongs to the global body of Christ and cannot be administratively isolated by any single nation or ethnicity.
- **Source of Attributes:** The church's essence is not an “administrative unit” but the “pillar of truth.” When the church fully submits administratively to non-faith-based power, it risks losing its holiness.
- **Independence from the System:** The church's legitimacy comes from Christ's presence, not state permission. Whether registered or not, the reality of the church as Christ's body remains indisputable.

## Scriptural Support and Interpretation

- 1 Timothy 3:15: “The household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth.” Interpretation: The church must defend truth rather than cooperate with secular policies to deconstruct it.
- Ephesians 4:4-6: “One body and one Spirit... one Lord, one faith, one baptism.” Interpretation: This refutes any attempt to “nationalize” or “localize” the church through administrative divisions, affirming the unity of the universal body of Christ.

## Historical Examples and Contemporary Relevance

- Historical Example: 17th-century English Nonconformists refused state-mandated uniformity in worship, insisting on the church’s right to independent worship.
- Contemporary Relevance: Sovereignty over the Lord’s Supper and baptism. The church holds biblically based authority to decide who may partake or be baptized, not subject to external political review.

## **VII. I believe in the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting** Theological Analysis: The Ultimate Destiny Guiding Present Life

- **Dual Citizenship:** Believers are citizens of God’s kingdom while living on earth. Yet the hope of eternal life makes obedience to earthly authorities relative and loyalty to God’s kingdom absolute.
- **Fear of Final Judgment:** A holy fear of God’s ultimate judgment should outweigh fear of temporal penalties from earthly powers. This is the final safeguard for believers to maintain conscience boundaries.
- **Complete Reversal of Values:** Eternal life means our investments are not in present worldly status but in the eternal kingdom.

## Scriptural Support and Interpretation

- Luke 12:4-5: “Do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do. But I will warn you whom to fear...” Interpretation: This draws the boundary of fear. Abandoning truth for survival leads to facing God’s eternal judgment.
- John 11:25-26: “Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.” Interpretation: Eternal life is the church’s firmest anchor in persecution.

## Historical Examples and Contemporary Relevance

- Historical Example: Predecessors like Wang Mingdao refused compromise during long imprisonments, believing the “eternal ledger” far outweighs present sentences.
- Contemporary Relevance: Refuse to sign statements of apostasy, informing on brothers and sisters, or insincerely praising values contrary to faith. Believers firmly trust that all humiliation and loss will be personally wiped away by the Lord in eternity, with tears removed.

**Concluding Declaration:** God’s sovereignty is absolute, Christ’s headship is non-transferable, the Holy Spirit’s revelation is unmodifiable, and the church’s essence is transcendent. Any compromise on these boundaries crosses the red line of faith.